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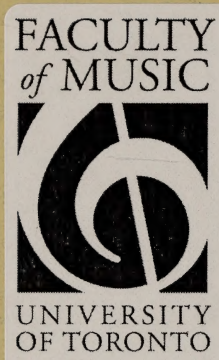

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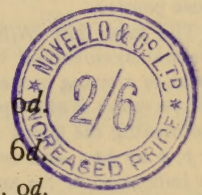

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PREFACE

Throughout his career as an artist, Hugo Wolf was possessed by the desire to compose an instrumental work in which he could express his passionate love for the life and landscape of the south as he many times expressed it in his "Italian Songs." The project was already in his mind in 1887, when his first compositions were published; it took definite shape in the years 1893 and 1894, during the period of his "Italian Songs"; and it was still occupying him at the time of his final breakdown.

It is important to know that the Italian Serenade was first conceived by him as a string quartet. This is its form in the manuscript of 1887. When he again took it up, some years later, he chose the orchestral form in order to have a richer palette of colours at his disposal. But after he had finished one movement and sketched two others, he went back to the idea of a string quartet, finding it after all the most suitable medium for his artistic ideas. The version for small orchestra was published after his death in an arrangement by Max Reger, and the version for string quartet appeared at the same time. We can assume that Reger played but a small part in arranging the score, but the fact remains that the string quartet version is the only one whose authenticity has never been disputed, and whose every note was written by the composer himself.

While we regret that Wolf never finished the slow movement and the final Tarantella, there is no need to view the existing "Italian Serenade" as an incomplete work of art. This one movement is in form and content as complete as only the work of a master can be, a rondo of classical perfection, filled with the glamour and warmth of the south, and of a rare intimacy and delicacy. It has charming passages of humour, alternating with gusts of intense passion.

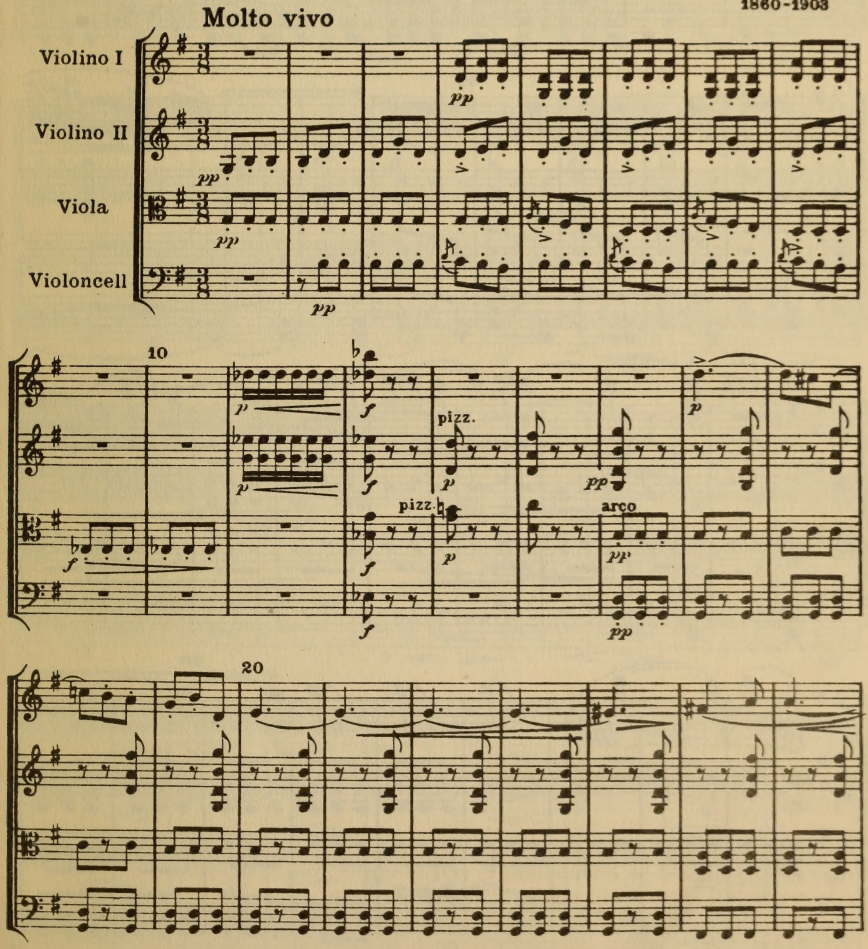
The fact that Wolf himself arranged the quartet version from an orchestral score should be borne in mind by all players, whether they are a quartet or a string orchestra—for sometimes a performance of this delicate music *en masse* is attempted. Wolf altered nearly all the dynamic markings when making the string quartet version; in many cases *ff* was replaced by *f*, *f* by *p*, *p* by *pp*; and even *ppp* was diminished to *pppp*. This gives us a clear indication of his artistic intentions. The piece is a real Notturno that can never be played too delicately; and for this reason, apart from its aesthetic value, it is an education for all string players. There is hardly another work in musical literature that demands of the player such a combination of careful bowing, exactness in intonation, expressive cantabile, and extreme speed.

When the Serenade is performed by a string orchestra the recitatives should be played by soloists; and further occasions for solo playing can easily be found by an intelligent conductor who goes back to the score of the orchestral version and studies it carefully.

A. ABER

Italian Serenade

Hugo Wolf
1860-1903



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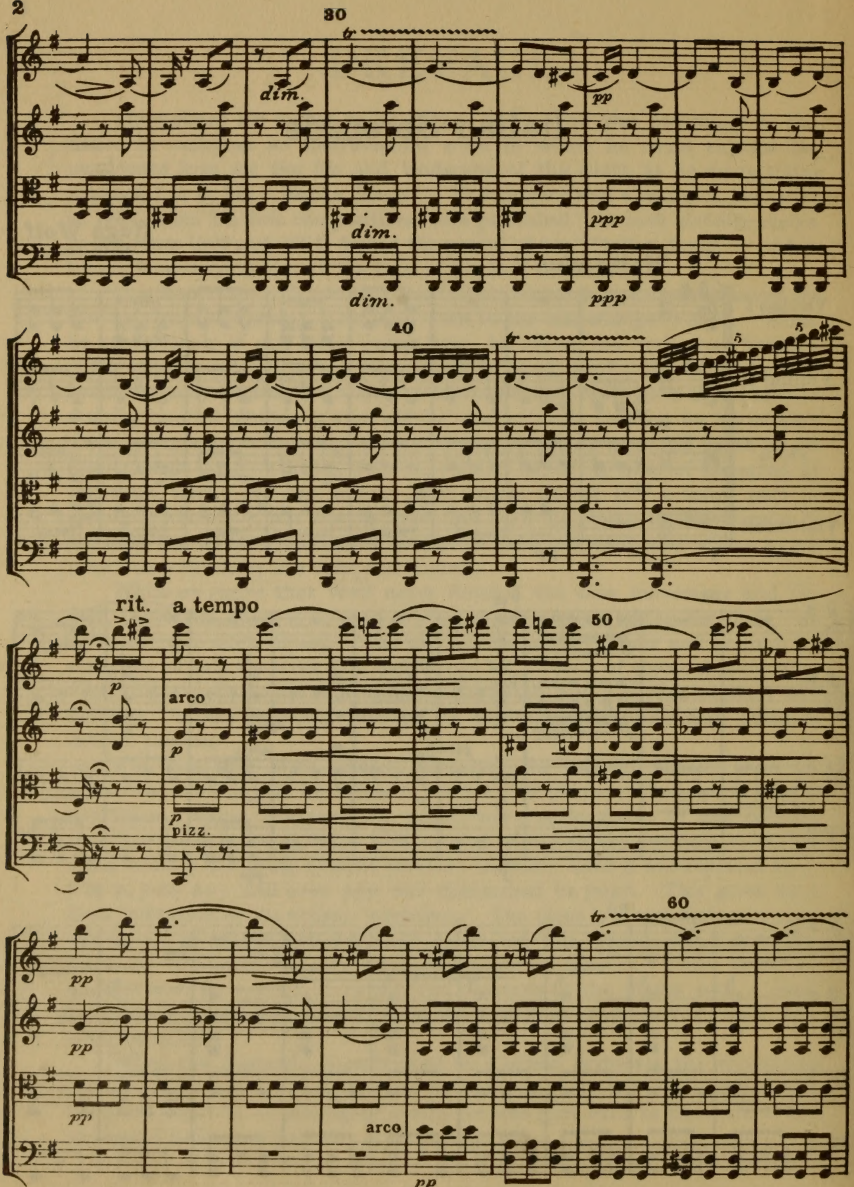
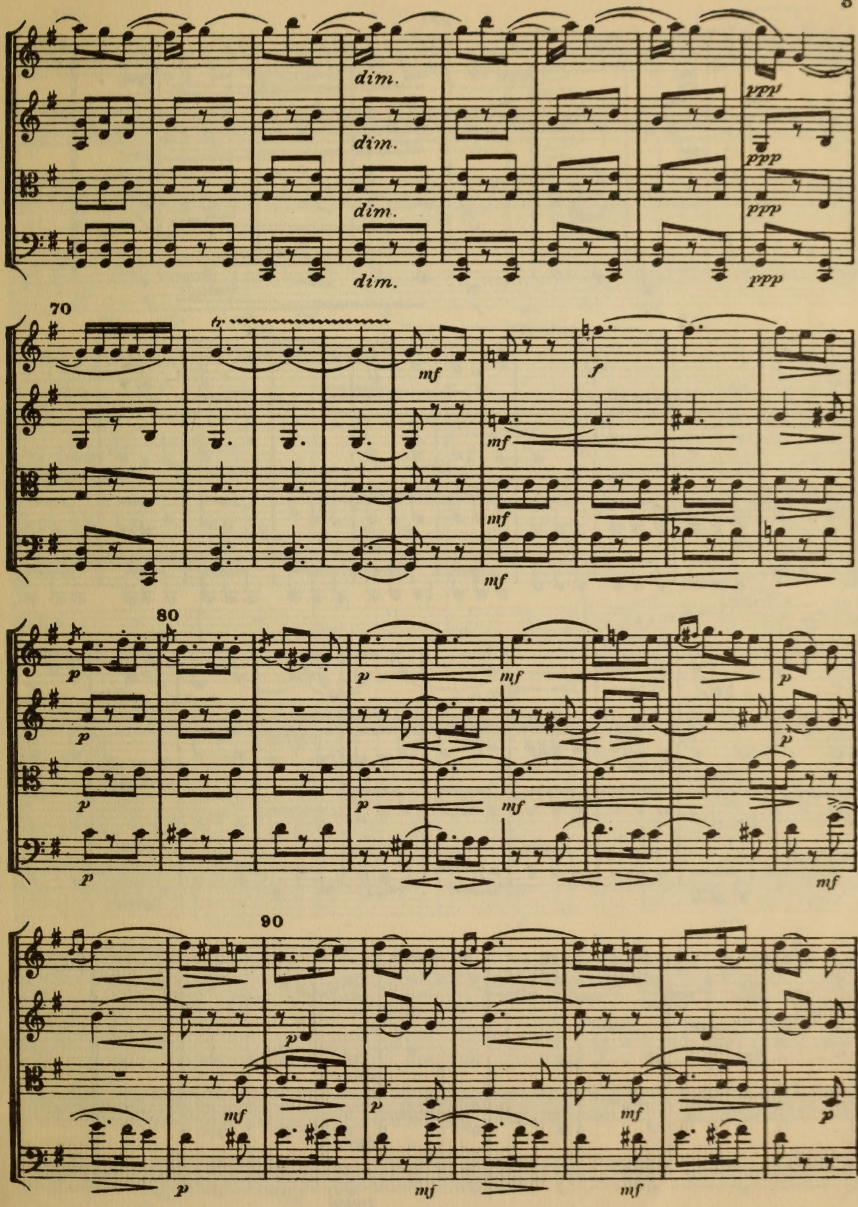
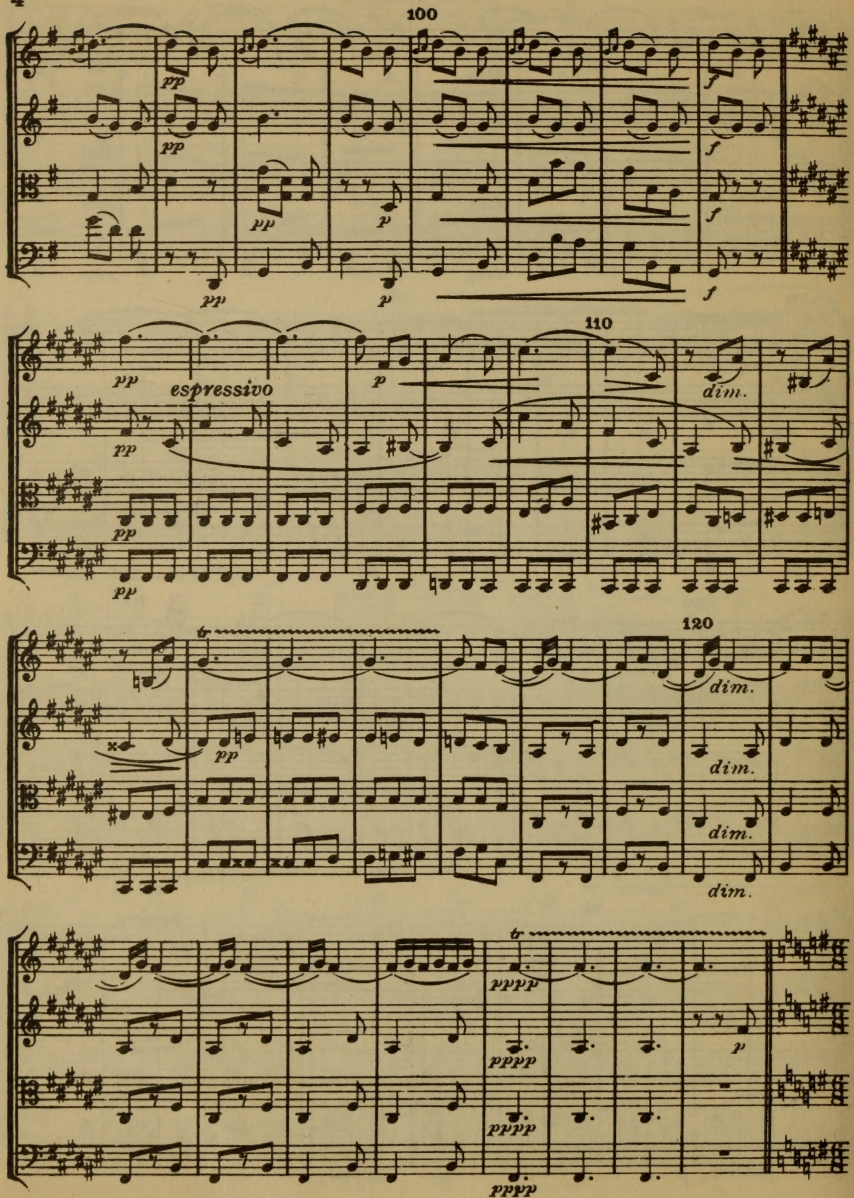
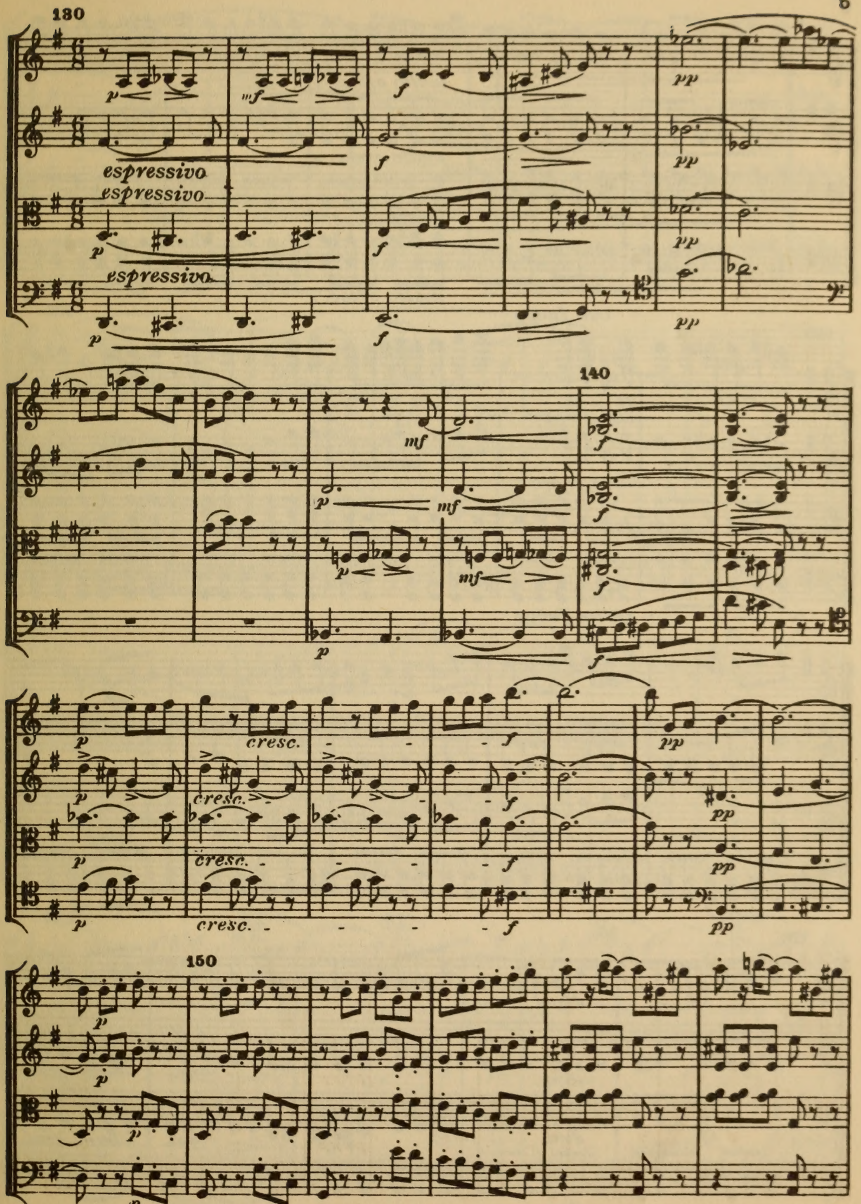
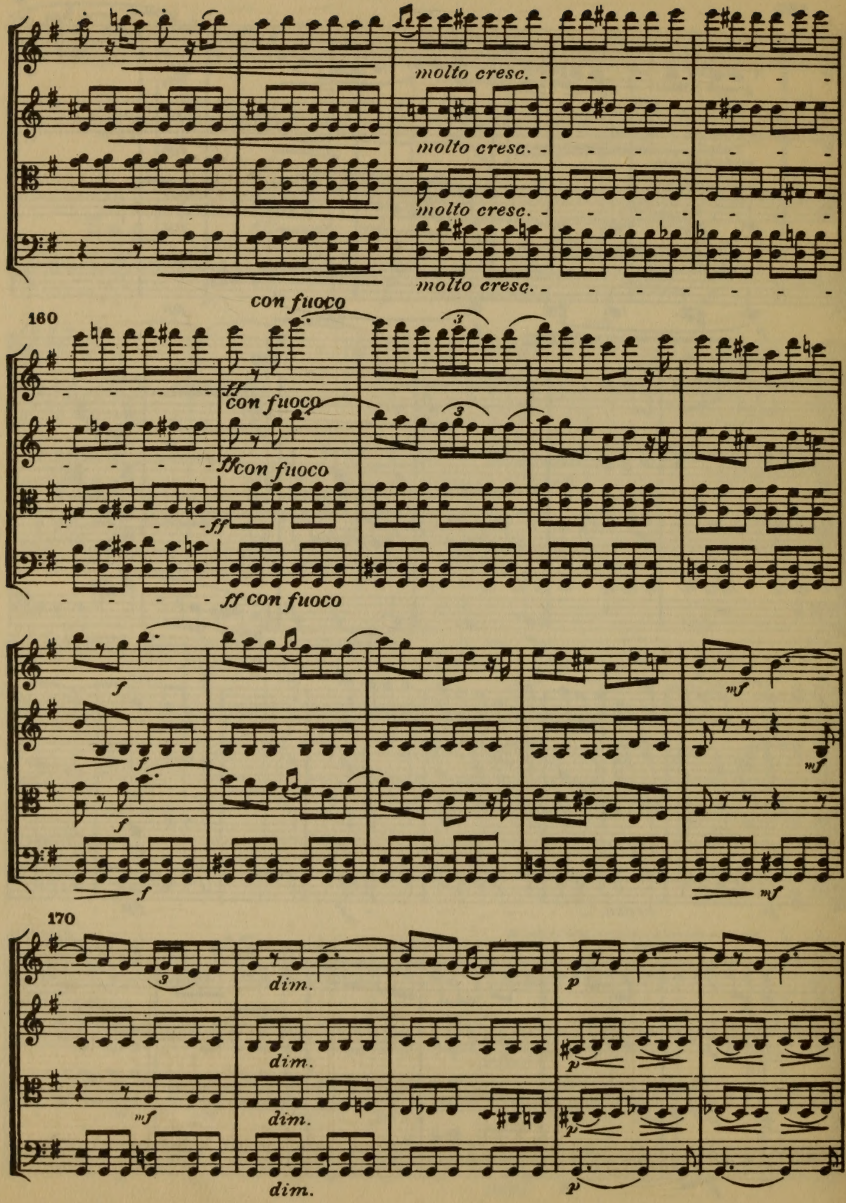
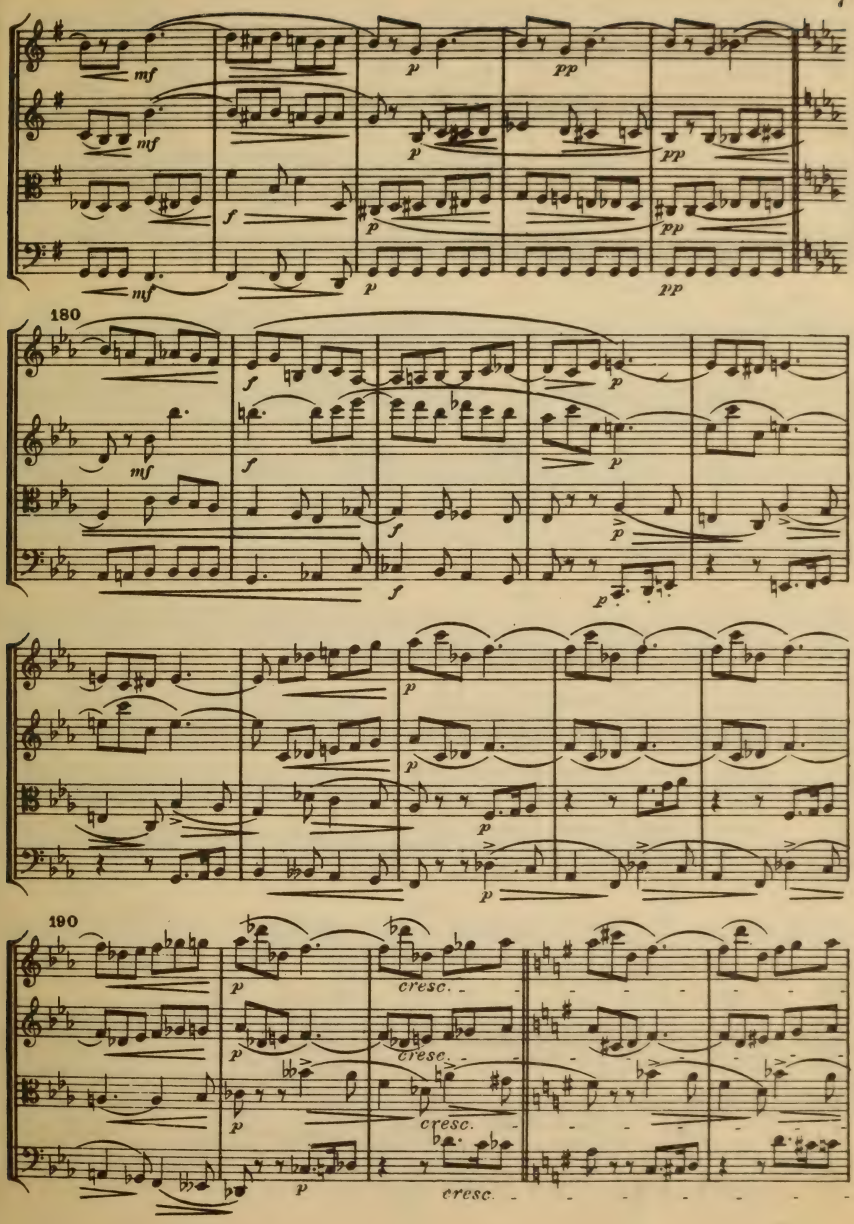

30
tr
dim.
dim.
dim.
pp
ppp
ppp
40
tr
5
5
rit.
a tempo
50
p
arco
p
p
pizz.
60
tr
pp
pp
pp
arco
pp

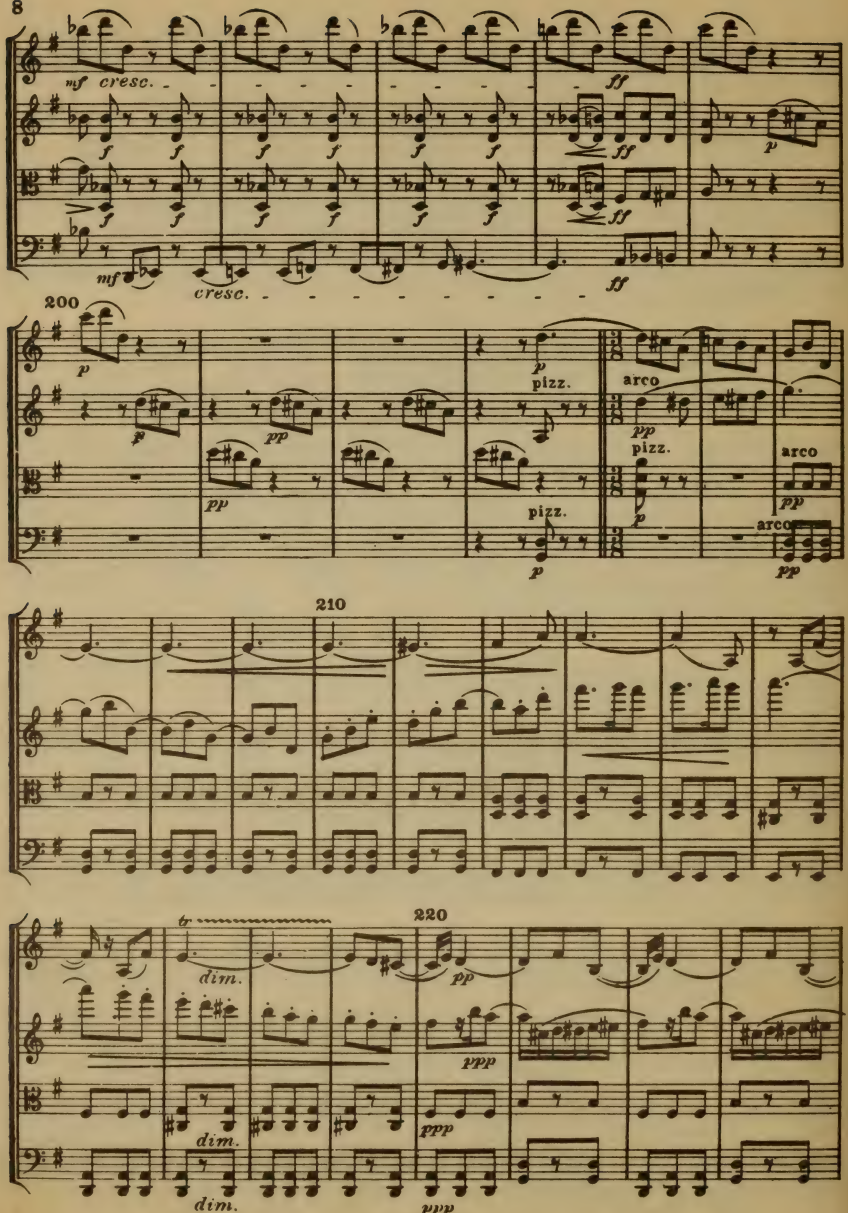

dim.
dim.
dim.
dim.
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp
70
tr
mf
f
mf
mf
mf
80
p
p
p
p
p
p
mf
p
p
mf
mf
90
p
mf
p
mf
p
p
mf
mf

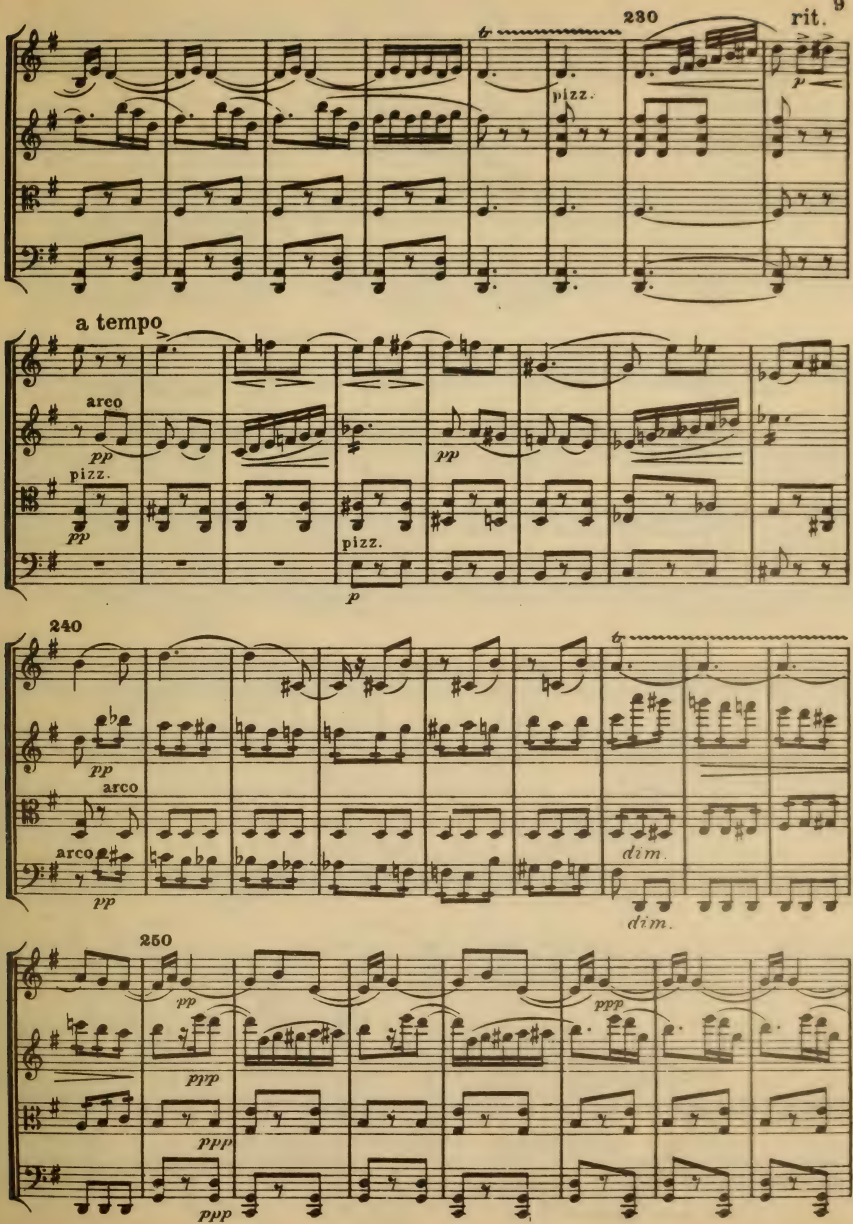

100
pp
pp
pp
p
pp
p
f
f
f
f
110
pp
espressivo
p
dim.
pp
pp
pp
120
tr
pp
dim.
dim.
dim.
dim.
tr
pppp
pppp
pppp
pppp
p

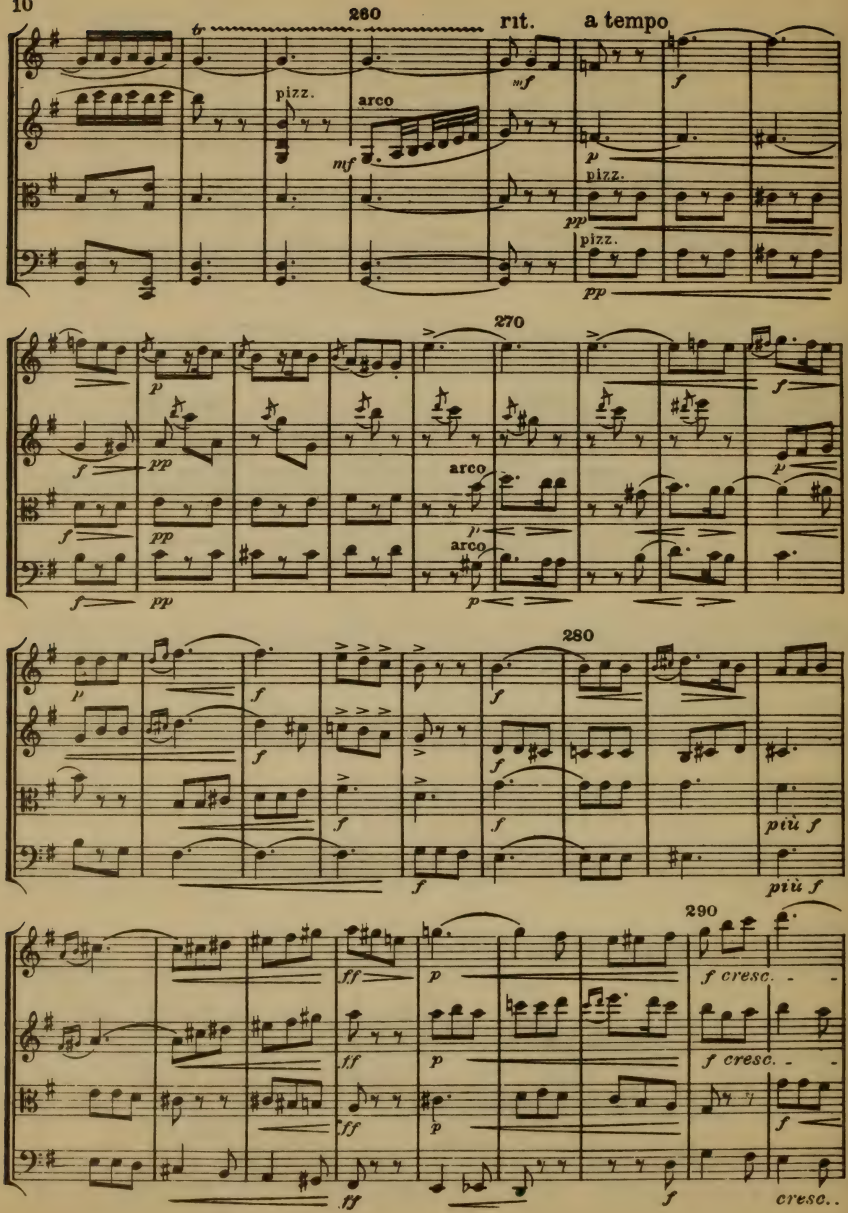

130
espressivo
espressivo
espressivo
140
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
150

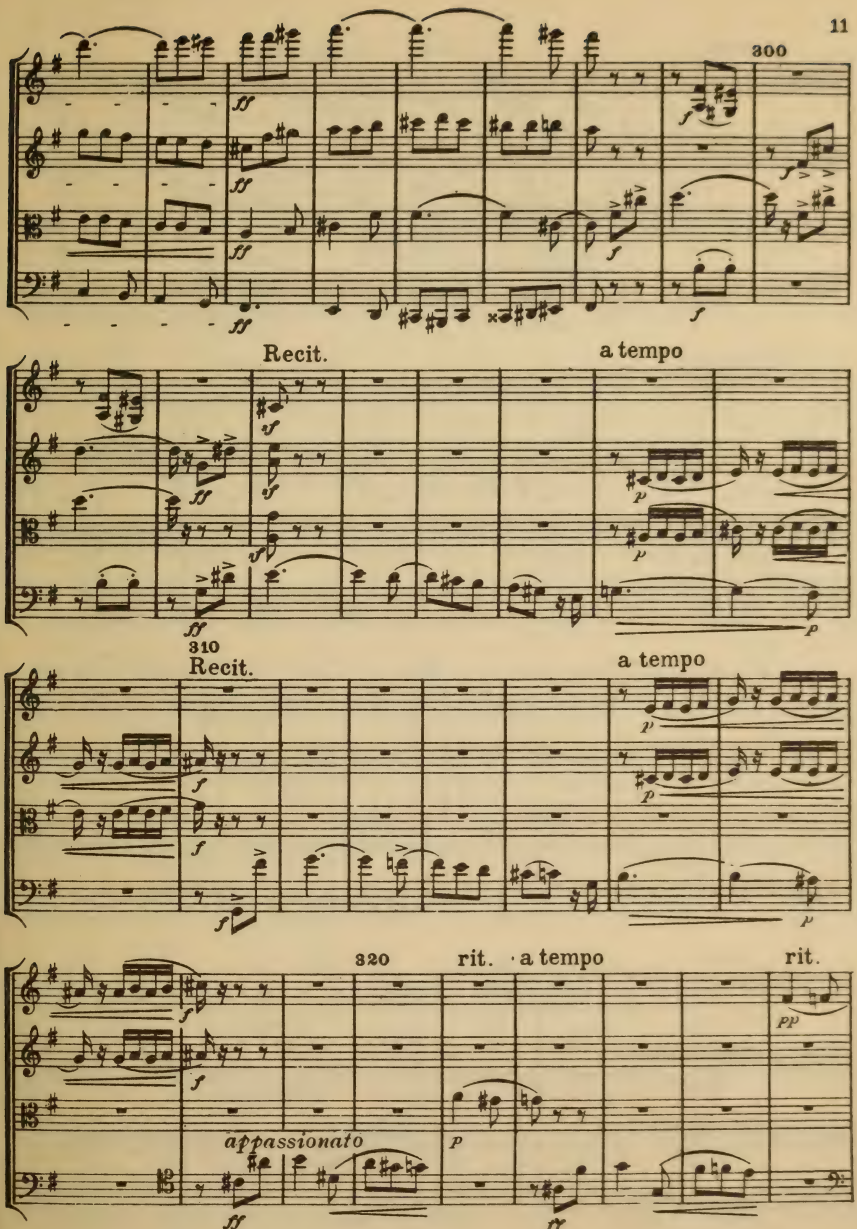

molto cresc.
molto cresc.
molto cresc.
molto cresc.
con fuoco
160
ff
con fuoco
ff con fuoco
ff
ff con fuoco
f
f
f
f
mf
mf
mf
170
dim.
dim.
dim.
dim.
p
p
p
p
mf

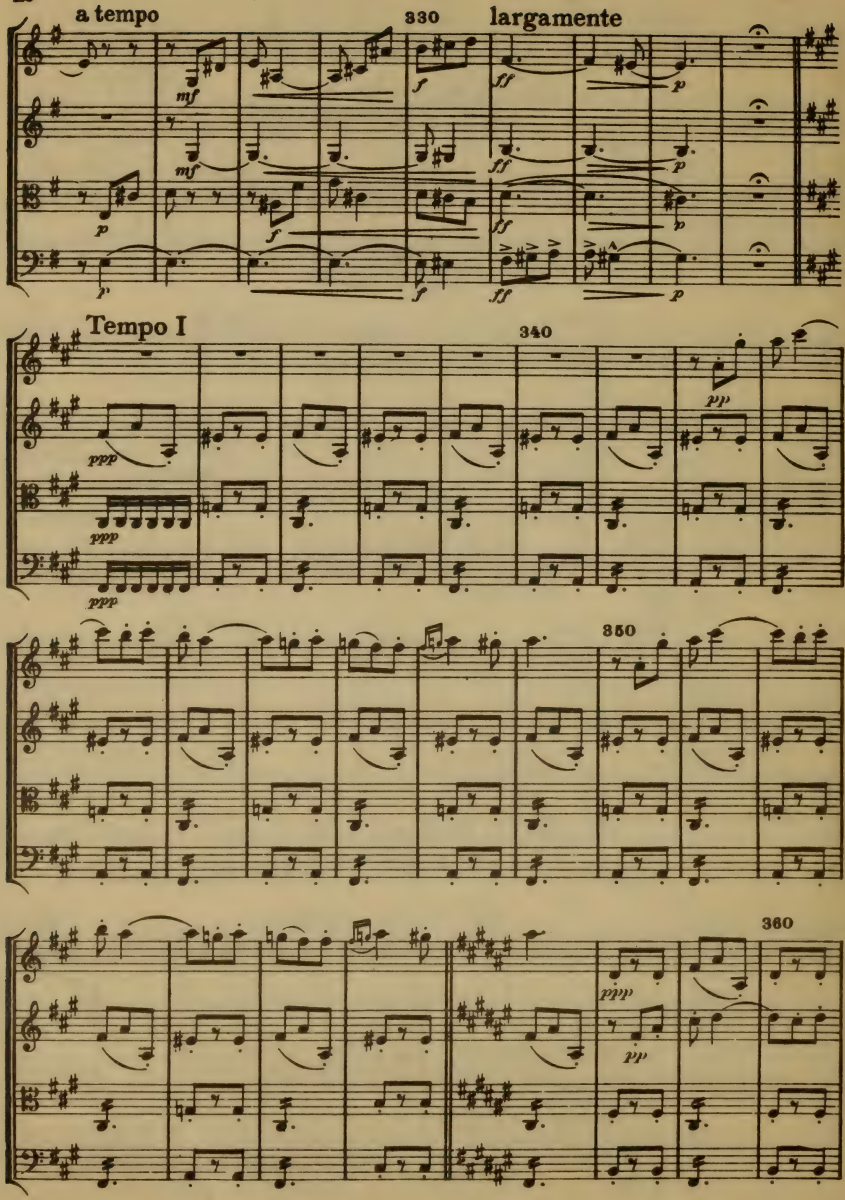

mf
mf
mf
p
p
p
f
pp
pp
pp
180
mf
f
f
f
p
p
p
p
p
p
190
p
p
p
p
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.

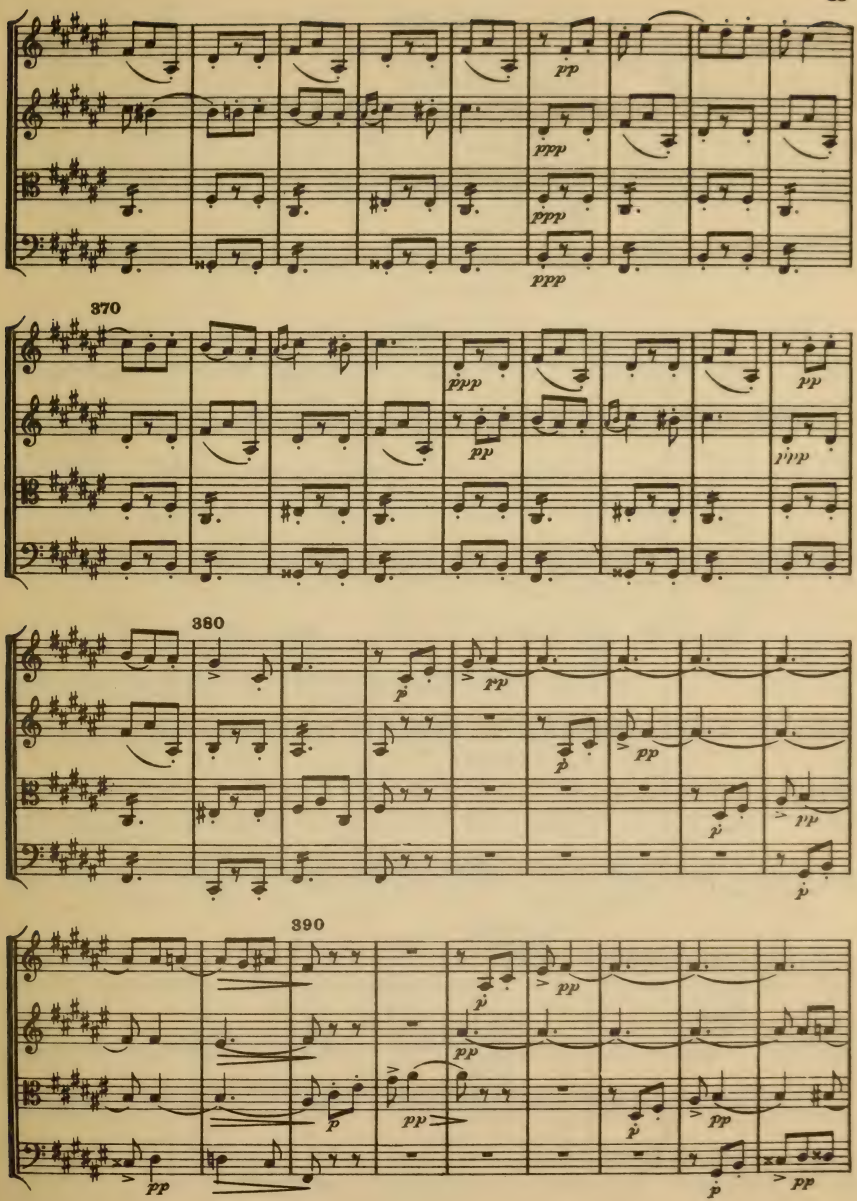

mf cresc.
ff
p
mf
cresc.
ff
200
p
pizz.
arco
pp
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
210
220
dim.
pp
ppp
dim.
ppp
dim.
ppp

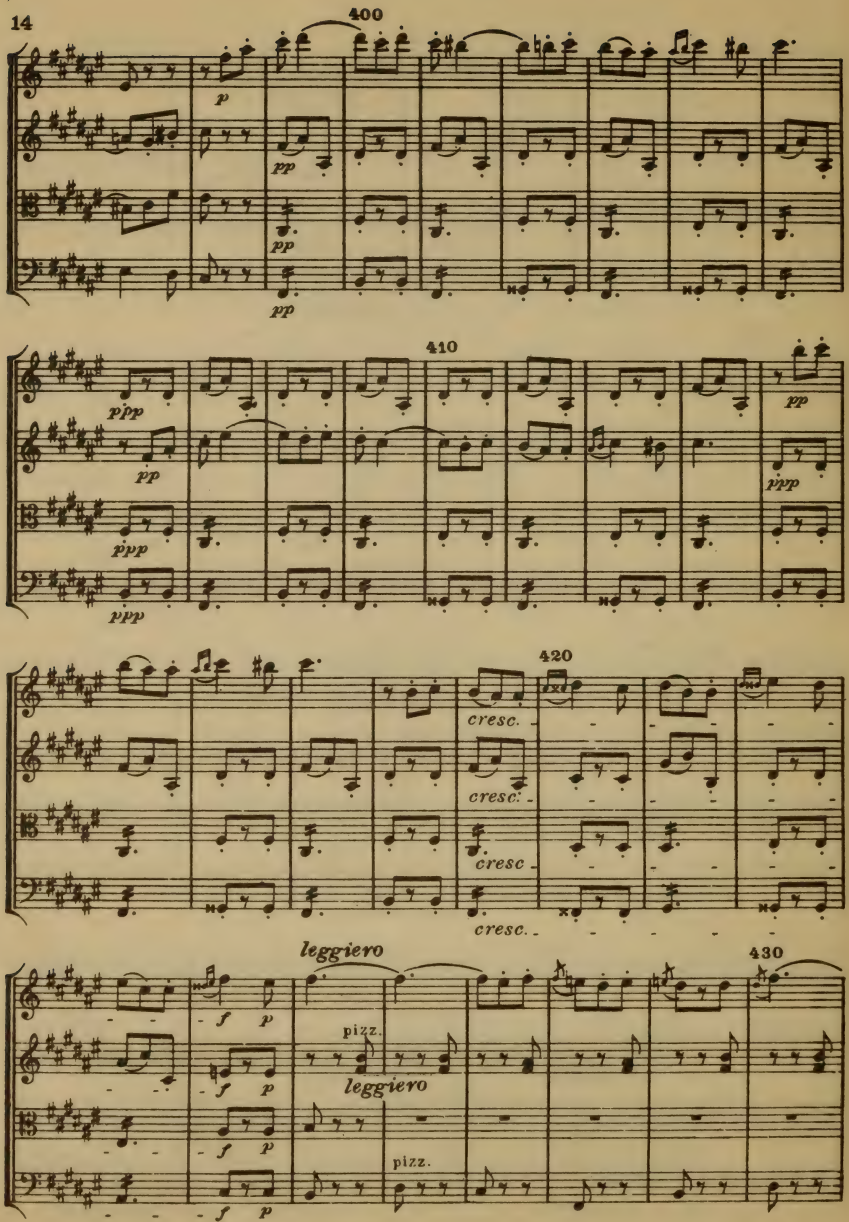

230
rit.
pizz.
p
a tempo
arco
pp
pizz.
pp
pp
pizz.
p
240
pp
arco
arco
pp
dim.
dim.
250
pp
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp

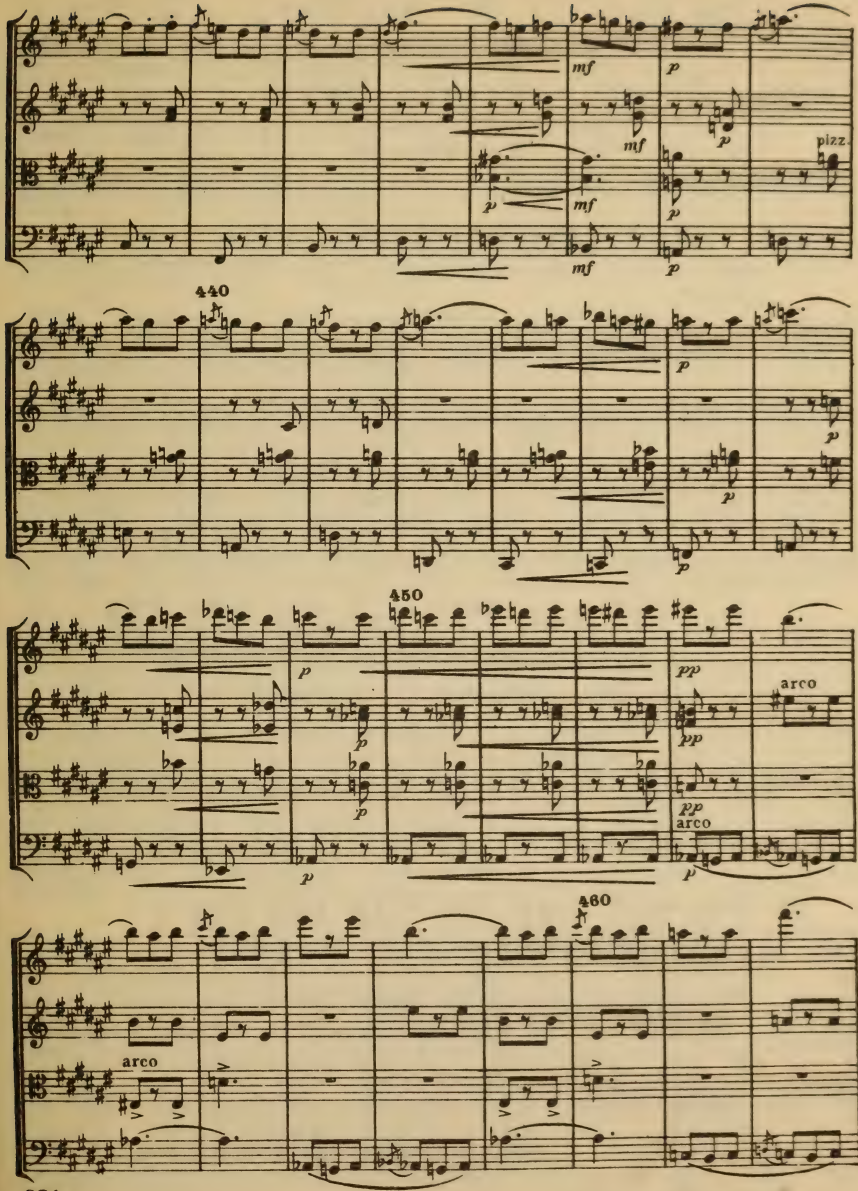

280
rit.
a tempo
pizz.
arco
mf
p
pizz.
pp
pizz.
pp
270
p
f
pp
f
pp
arco
p
arco
p
f
pp
280
p
f
f
f
f
f
più f
f
più f
290
ff
p
f cresc.
ff
p
f cresc.
ff
p
f
ff
f
cresc..

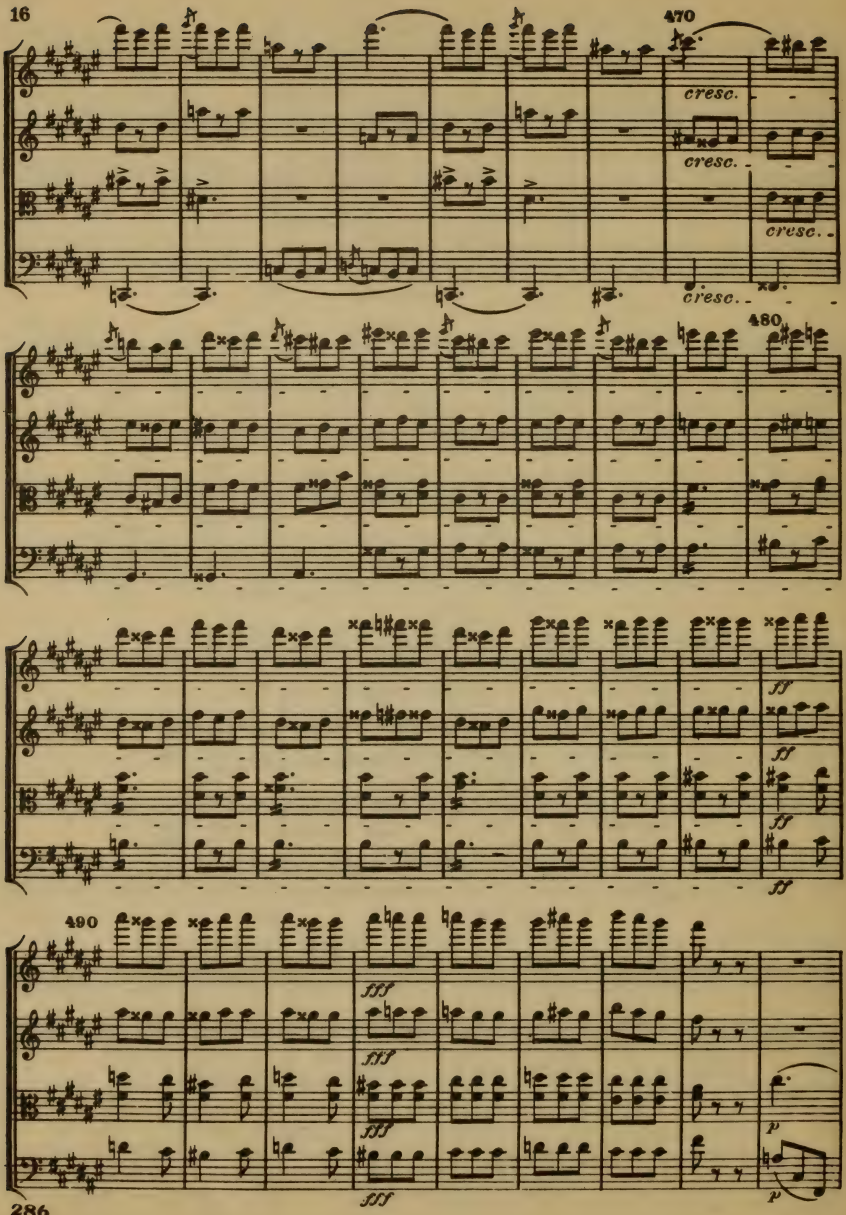

300
Recit.
a tempo
310
Recit.
a tempo
320
rit.
a tempo
rit.
appassionato

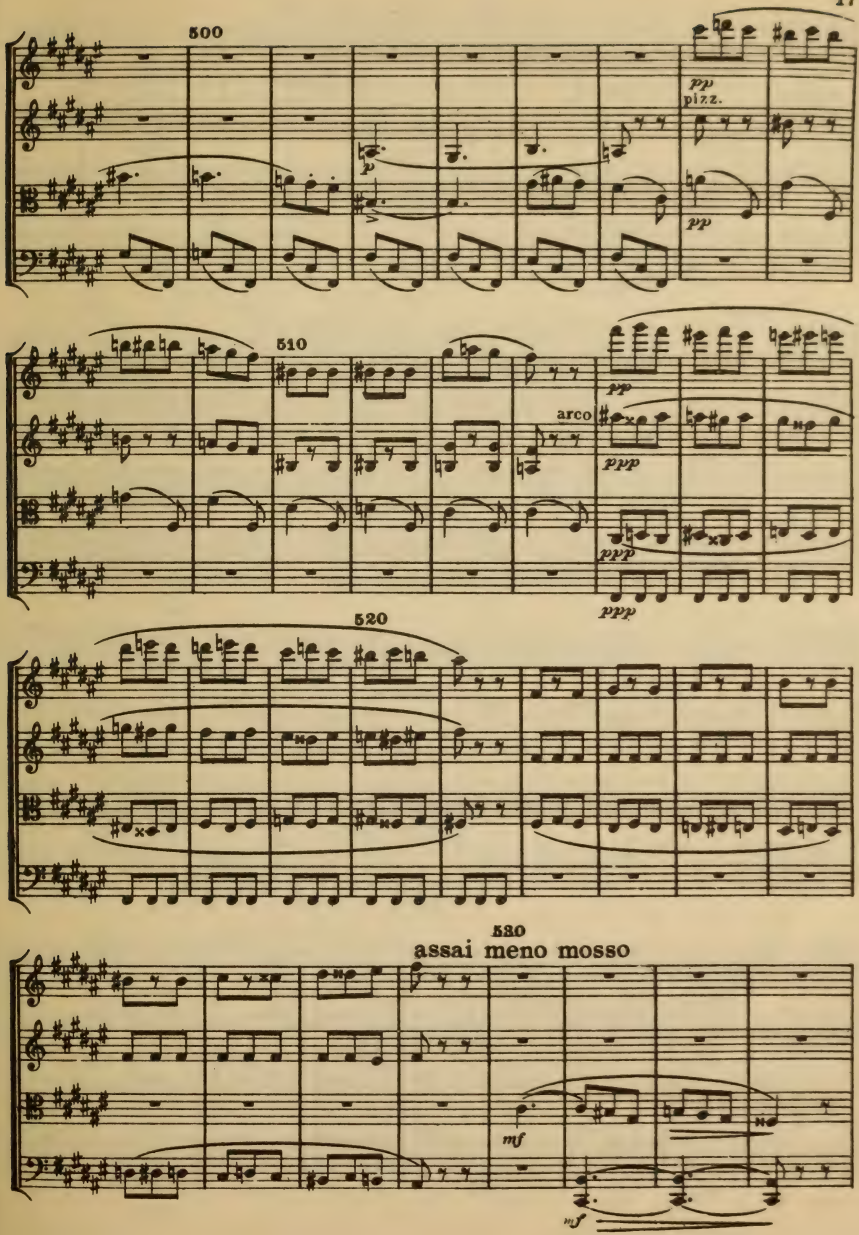

a tempo
330
largamente
Tempo I
340
350
360

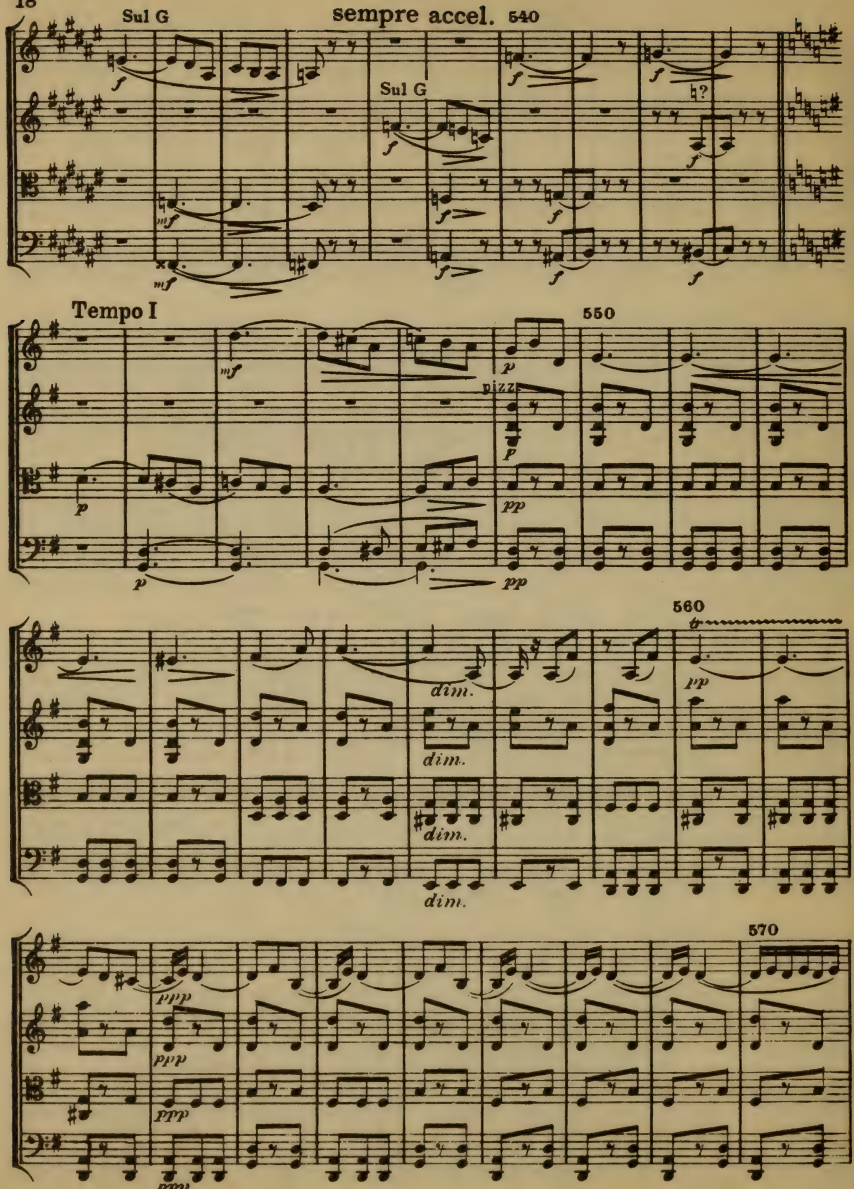

370
380
390

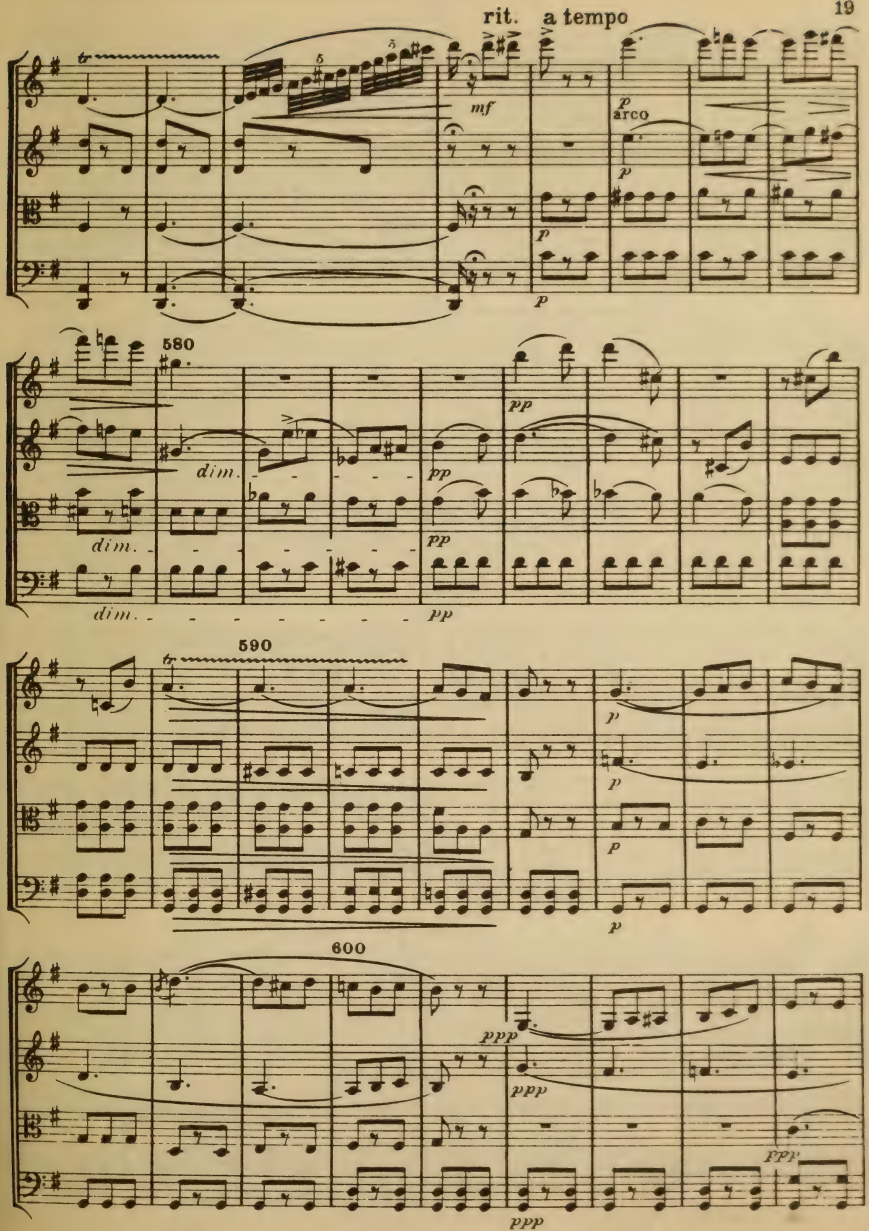

400
p
pp
pp
pp
410
ppp
pp
ppp
ppp
pp
ppp
420
cresc.
cresc.
cresc
cresc.
leggiero
430
f p
pizz.
leggiero
f p
f p
pizz.
f p

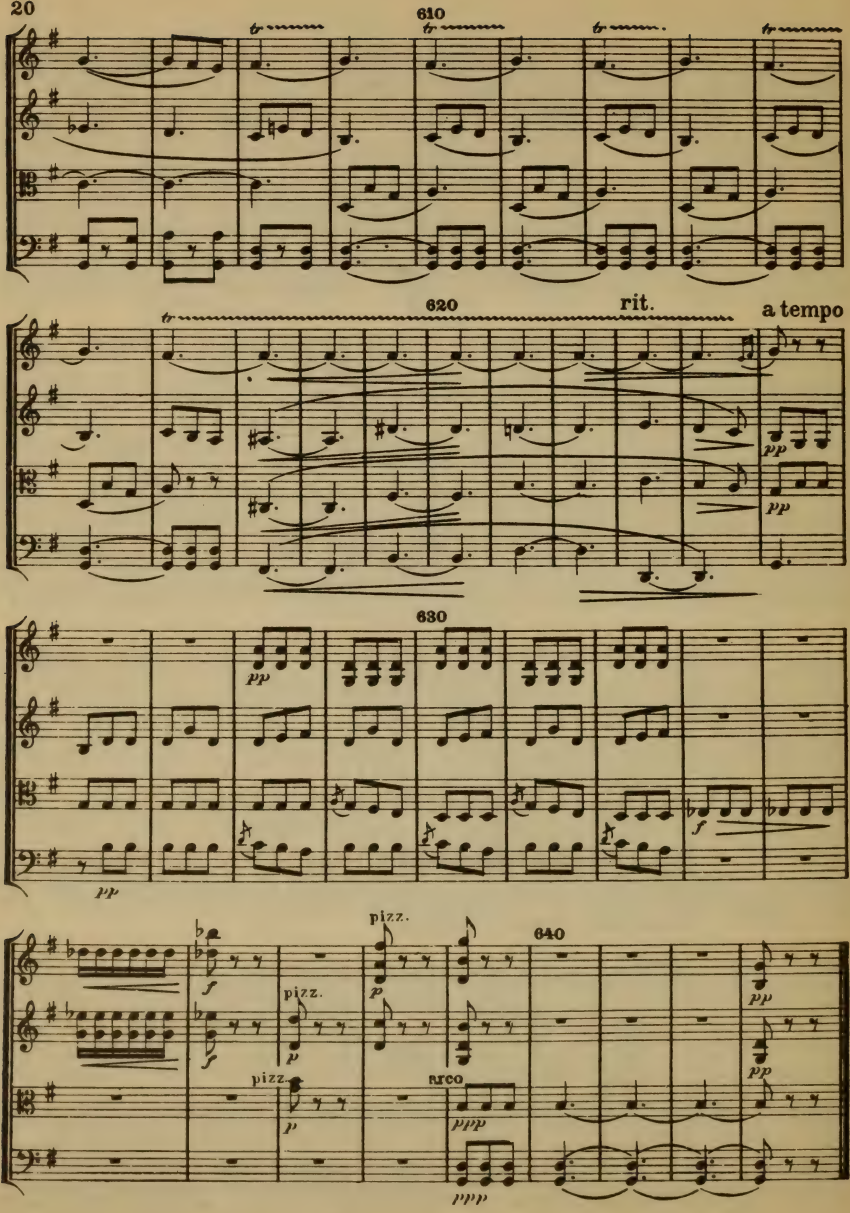

mf
p
mf
p
pizz.
p
mf
p
mf
p
440
p
p
p
p
450
p
pp
arco
p
pp
pp
arco
p
460
arco


470
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
480
ff
ff
ff
ff
490
fff
fff
fff
fff
p
p


500
pp
pizz.
p
pp
510
arco
pp
ppp
ppp
ppp
520
530
assai meno mosso
mf
mf


Sul G
sempre accel.
540
Sul G
Tempo I
550
pizz.
560
dim.
570


rit.
a tempo
mf
arco
580
dim.
pp
590
600
ppp


610
620
rit.
a tempo
630
640
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
arco

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